

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-5NEW YORK TIMES
1 MAY 1979

SENATOR NUNN SEES U.S. ARMS-LAG PERIL

Lists Steps That Should Be Taken
to Strengthen Military Before
Weapons Pact Is Signed

By RICHARD BURT

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 30 — Senator Sam Nunn, Democrat of Georgia, said today that unless the United States moved quickly to strengthen its nuclear and conventional armed forces, a new strategic-arms treaty with Moscow would "do little more than ratify an emerging Soviet military superiority."

Speaking at the annual meeting of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, Mr. Nunn expressed strong dissatisfaction with the existing level of American defenses.

The Senator said that if President Carter thought "that the present military balance and trends within it are an acceptable foundation for our nation's security, I respectfully disagree."

Influence on White House

Mr. Nunn, a member of the Armed Services Committee, has emerged as one of the leading authorities in Congress on military matters, and his views on the emerging American-Soviet treaty to limit offensive nuclear weapons are said to be likely to influence how several senators vote on the issue. As a result, the White House is thought to be especially sensitive to his concerns in negotiating the final details of the agreement.

However, today's speech appeared to suggest that Mr. Nunn's final position on the agreement would be based less on the specific terms of the accord than on the military programs Mr. Carter is prepared to support in conjunction with it.

Speaking to an enthusiastic audience, Mr. Nunn listed several steps toward improving American defense capabilities that he said were necessary "with or without" the projected treaty. These included reducing the vulnerability of strategic missiles, modernizing nuclear forces in Europe, increasing naval shipbuilding and revitalizing "intelligence capability."

Position of 'Clinging Parity'

Mr. Nunn termed these tasks "essential to our national security" and said that no foreseeable arms-control accord could "provide an adequate substitute for them."

Describing changes in the American-Soviet military balance, Senator Nunn asserted that, "in the space of little more than 15 years, the United States has moved from a position of overall superiority to a position that can best be characterized as clinging parity."

In the area of strategic arms, he said, "the Soviet Union has eliminated the decisive advantages we once enjoyed, and appears to be embarked upon a drive to obtain nuclear superiority."

In the realm of shorter-range, "tactical" nuclear weapons, the Senator said that "the Soviets not only have erased a longstanding NATO superiority, but are developing forces with growing advantages over those of NATO."